THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MANAGER'S REPORT

DATE ISSUED: October 26, 2001 REPORT NO. 01-233

ATTENTION: Honorable Mayor and City Council

SUBJECT: Pedestrian Safety Issues

REFERENCE: None

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

Councilmember Inzunza requested that the City Manager provide background information on pedestrian fatalities and statistics on pedestrian safety. Also, Councilmember Atkins requested information on the standards the City uses to set pedestrian timing and whether they are mandatory.

DISCUSSION

A report written by Barbara McCann and Bianca DeLille for the Surface Transportation Policy Project, titled *Mean Streets 2000* was issued in the summer of 2000. While this report is widely quoted, it contains some erroneous information pertaining to fatal pedestrian accidents in the City of San Diego. The report stated that there were 62 pedestrian fatalities in 1997 and 72 pedestrian fatalities in 1998 within the City of San Diego. Based on Police Traffic Accident Reports, there were 25 pedestrian fatalities in 1997 and 25 pedestrian fatalities in 1998 on public streets.

Pedestrian fatality and injury data, on public streets, was collected from Police Traffic Accident Reports from 1996 through 2000. The study was only conducted for public streets because the division has the responsibility of the signage, striping, and traffic controls for public streets. The following chart shows the pedestrian fatalities and injuries and the calculated rate per 100,000 population within the City over the five year period.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORTED PEDESTRIAN FATALITIES/INJURIES
ON PUBLIC STREET[1]

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Fatalities	21	25	25	33	19
Injuries	668	608	598	475	495
Total	689	633	623	508	514
Rate per 100,000	58	53	51	40	40

A survey was also conducted with several other jurisdictions to make a comparison of pedestrian fatalities and injuries over a three year period. The following table reflects the results of that survey.

PEDESTRIAN FATALITIES/INJURIES
RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION

	1997			**1998**			**1999**		
	Fatal	Injury	Rate	Fatal	Injury	Rate	Fatal	Injury	Rate
San Diego, CA	25	608	53	25	598	51	33	475	40
San Diego County	39	497	35	40	509	36	42	537	37
Phoenix, AZ[2]	na	na	na	44	655	58	51	654	61
Los Angeles, CA	129	2,857	82	87	2,843	80	102	2,720	76
Sacramento, CA	16	250	67	6	228	58	13	252	66
San Antonio, TX[3]	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
San Jose, CA	20	437	53	17	381	45	15	389	45

The Traffic Engineering Division, over the years, has been proactive in its approach to pedestrian safety. This includes accident surveillance, responding to requests from citizens, the San Diego Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program, and traffic signal timing for pedestrians.

[1]Excludes pedestrian fatalities that occurred on private property

[2]Data was not available for 1997 at the time of the writing of this report

[3]Data was not available at the time of the writing of this report

Accident surveillance is an ongoing review of reported traffic accidents using the Traffic Collision Reporting System (TCRS), which was developed by Traffic Engineering under a grant from the Office of Traffic Safety. This system provides data for engineers to analyze traffic accident patterns and conditions. From this analysis, possible measures are determined to enhance the safety performance of an intersection or road segment. The division also receives and evaluates approximately 10,000 requests each year regarding traffic issues from citizens and referrals from other departments. The division has initiated the San Diego Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program. This program is under contract to Safe Moves to conduct bicycle and pedestrian safety programs for kindergarten through middle school children. Safe Moves has conducted 60 community rodeos reaching 5,384 kids, 102 school based rodeos reaching 7,513 kids, and 346 workshops at 135 schools reaching 35,279 kids.

In regards to the setting of pedestrian timing at signals, The City of San Diego abides by national standards as outlined in the Federal Highway Administration's *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD), and regional standards outlined in the State of California's *CalTrans Traffic Manual*.

The steady WALK (walking person) indication lasts seven seconds. It is the time pedestrians may leave the curb and proceed across the road. This is in direct conformity with the MUTCD, which states, "Under normal conditions, the WALK interval should be at least 4 to 7 seconds in length so that pedestrians will have adequate opportunity to leave the curb before the clearance interval is shown." WALK intervals shorter than 7 seconds but greater than 3 seconds may occasionally be used if conditions warrant it. This is in compliance with the MUTCD which also states the following: "The lower values may be appropriate where it is desired to favor the length of an opposing phase and if pedestrian volumes and characteristics do not require the longer interval..." At some locations, a longer WALK of 10 seconds duration is used. This may be necessary if a large number of pedestrians leave the curb at the same time. Finally, at most locations downtown, the WALK lasts much longer than 7 seconds, since each movement has a predetermined amount of green time. The State of California's *Traffic Manual* makes no reference to the duration of the WALK indication.

After the WALK interval terminates, the FLASHING DON'T WALK interval, indicated by a flashing red hand, begins. The length of the FLASHING DON'T WALK is determined by dividing the street width by the pedestrian walk rate. The duration of the FLASHING DON'T WALK in the City of San Diego is actually longer than that required by the MUTCD and the *Caltrans Traffic Manual* because of our method of measuring street width. The City of San Diego uses the distance from the pedestrian ramp on one side of the crossing to the pedestrian ramp at the other side of the crossing as the street width, whereas the distance specified to use by the *MUTCD* and *Caltrans Traffic Manual* is the distance as measured from the curb to the center of the farthest traveled lane. The pedestrian walk rate specified to use by both the *MUTCD* and the *Caltrans Traffic Manual* is 4 feet per second. The City of San Diego uses this walk rate or occasionally, we use a lower walk rate of 3.5 feet per second. The lower walk rate may be used at intersections that have a high percentage of school children, elderly, or disabled pedestrians.

The pedestrian timings at all locations at traffic signals throughout the City of San Diego conform with the national standards stipulated in the MUTCD and the regional standards set forth in the *Caltrans Traffic Manual*.

The Police Department through its Juvenile Service Division promotes pedestrian safety at elementary schools through the School Safety Patrol Program. This program uses students to facilitate pedestrian street crossing coupled with educational programs to raise the level of traffic safety awareness among students.

The Police Department's Traffic Division regularly conducts high visibility pedestrian safety enforcement campaigns at strategic locations such as San Diego State University during the opening weeks of a new school semester. Through this enforcement activity, new students learn about the area traffic patterns and become more aware of their surroundings. The Traffic Division is also starting a traffic safety campaign focusing on promoting traffic/pedestrian safety for senior citizens. A series of traffic safety programs will be presented at senior facilities throughout the city. The classes will be taught by Retired Senior Volunteers (RSVP) who have been specially trained.

Respectfully submitted,

D. Cruz Gonzalez
Director, Transportation Department

Approved: George I. Loveland
Senior Deputy City Manager

LOVELAND/AH